

An Unfaithful Bride

Key Verse: *“The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.”*
—Hosea 1:2

Selected Scripture:
Hosea 1

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA

was particularly addressed to the ten tribes of Israel. It was given during a time of great decline in their kingdom, and was soon followed by their captivity to the Assyrian empire. This was also the time of Israel’s deepest depravity, although God still maintained his covenant with them. Hosea’s name signifies “salvation,” which fits well with his prophecy. Of the minor prophets, only Zechariah speaks more often than Hosea concerning Israel’s future hope of being “saved” by the mighty power of God.

The opening chapter of the Book of Hosea appears to have been recorded in conjunction with the latter part of the reign of “Jeroboam the son of Joash.” (Hos. 1:1) Although Jeroboam “did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD,” he was better than those who followed him. In his mercy, God said that he would not “blot out the name of Israel from under heaven” during his reign, but save them “by the hand of Jeroboam.”—II Kings 14:24-27

As recorded in our Key Verse, God spoke to Hosea, telling him to take a wife who had been an adulteress,

and have children by her. Children born of a woman who had lived in immorality were at that time held in very low regard, and deemed as having their mother's disposition and spirit. God's words, although spoken to Hosea, were symbolically in reference to his displeasure with the nation of Israel. Israel, who had been united to God by the Law Covenant, repeatedly ran after other gods, uniting to them in an adulterous manner. As each new generation of Israelites was "born," these "children" continued in the disobedient ways of their predecessors. This further pointed out the general unfaithfulness of the nation to their true "husband"—the Heavenly Father.

The sins of Israel continued even to the time of the coming of their Messiah, whom they rejected. Lamenting their condition, Jesus spoke these words to them, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:37,38) The favor which had previously been exclusively theirs was now being withdrawn. Jesus continued, saying, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (vs. 39) This provided a ray of hope, that eventually Israel will recognize their Messiah, Christ Jesus, and once again receive God's blessing. Centuries earlier, David had prophesied of these things, similarly stating that Israel would again be blessed.—Ps. 118:18-26

God's words to Hosea, as they symbolically apply to Israel, appear harsh. Yet, in reality they show his deep love, which had been severely wounded by their unfaithfulness. We are thankful, however, that God will bless Israel, and all mankind, in Messiah's kingdom, as he promised to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."—Gen. 22:18 ■